



FIRST THINGS FIRST

The right system for bright futures

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Submitting Agency: First Things First, White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council
Contact Person: Rochelle Lacapa, MPH, Regional Coordinator
Contact Number: (928) 532-5041

First Things First Allocates \$426,450 in the White Mountain Apache Region

The White Mountain Apache Regional Partnership Council has been working very hard to ensure that children birth through age five are healthy, safe and ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. One of the major tasks that the Regional Partnership Council has been working on is to create a Strategic Funding Plan for the region that will build on and expand services that are already being provided for children birth through age five. Based on the evidence from the White Mountain Apache Regional Needs and Assets Report, the Regional Partnership Council has identified four priority areas that will be funded for the next three years.

Priority 1: Increasing family support for teen parents, first-time parents and relative care givers.

Knowing that teen parents and first-time parents need a lot of support, encouragement and information, when having a baby, the Regional Partnership Council would like to see increased home-visiting programs to provide parenting and child care skills for these new parents. Additionally, relative care providers are a major source of child care in our communities; and, as such, need access to training, information and resources to improve the quality of care they provide to children. As a result, the Regional Partnership Council will work to expand trainings and resources for relative care providers.

Priority 2: Prevention of dental disease. Seventy-two percent of children screened through the Annual Head Start screening have been shown to have active dental disease. Of those, only 82 percent received treatment for their dental disease. Research has shown that when children have persistent infections and cavities in their mouth, they are at greater risk for contracting infections in other places in their body. Also, when children have pain in their mouth, it makes it difficult to perform simple tasks such as being able to eat or concentrate when they are in school. Given this, the Regional Partnership Council will work to implement a dental varnish program, which will help to prevent the high number of children who have active dental disease by the time they enter Head Start.

Priority 3: Increase language and literacy development. Language and literacy development is a huge factor in determining a child's success when they enter the school system. If a child is behind in his/her language development in kindergarten, he/she is then at risk for being behind all through his/her high school years. For all children, the home is the primary place where language and literacy begin to develop. As a result, parents and care givers are crucial in determining whether or not their child is ready for success in the classroom when they reach kindergarten. The Regional Partnership Council understands

the importance of language and literacy and will devote funding to the expansion and support of developing language and literacy programs for children birth through age five.

Priority 4: Increase public awareness and increased Census participation. First Things First strongly believes that the only way to make sure children are developing with all of the resources necessary is to have the communities they live in support their growth and development. The Regional Partnership Council will allocate a small amount of funds to help promote information regarding early childhood development and health in the region so that the community recognizes the benefit of investing in the youngest members of our community. Additionally, the Regional Partnership Council will work with other agencies and departments to increase the number of families who participate in the U.S. Census. The annual allocation for the region relies solely on the number of children and families that are identified by the U.S. Census. The greater the participation in the Census, the more potential for funds that can be brought into the community for programs and services for children birth through age five.

The Regional Partnership Council is excited to move forward with the vision and mission of First Things First in the region and looks forward to see which types of programs can be expanded and developed. Should you have any questions or if you would like more information about First Things First, please feel free to contact Rochelle Lacapa at (928) 532-5041 or via email at rlacapa@azftf.gov.